



Adele Mailer in her work clothes.

News photo by Jim Garrett

House painter's outfit masks artist

By ISABEL FORGANG

There's nothing unusual about an artist wearing old clothes when working. But a quilted ski jacket and a house painter's mask are the essentials of Adele Mailer's working wardrobe.

Presently, her work consists of experiments with transparent fabric collage. Spray glue holds it all together and the mask protects her from the toxic fumes. Because the windows of her bedroom-workshop have to be wide open when she works with the glue the jacket is a must during cold weather.

The end result of all this cutting and pasting can be seen in an exhibit of the collages at A Touch of Whimsey (1034A Lexington Ave., near E 74th St.).

Norman's suggestion

Layers of transparent fabrics such as chiffon, lace and net are placed over opaque moires, velvets and silks. Sometimes the fabrics are glued onto colored glass giving the resultant collage an intensity luminous quality.

Mrs. Mailer is also an actress. She studied with Lee Strasberg and appeared in several off-Broadway plays. Her ex-husband, Norman Mailer, suggested that she go on the stage.

As she tells it: "Norman said I was always acting around here, so why not try it on the stage!"

Between stints at Cafe la Mama and the

Provincetown Mass. Playhouse she went back to painting, mostly in oils. About six months ago, while cutting up fabrics, she decided to try to attach them to wood. Remembering a department store trick, she dipped the fabric into clear gelatin and glued it onto wood.

Slow Process

The gelatin worked for some fabrics, but stained others. Through trial and error, a successful combination of masking tape on the back of opaque fabrics and spray glue for the sheer ones slowly evolved.

Adele hopes to create giant fabric collages that will find their way into displays in department store windows. Smaller ones would be for sale in gift shops.

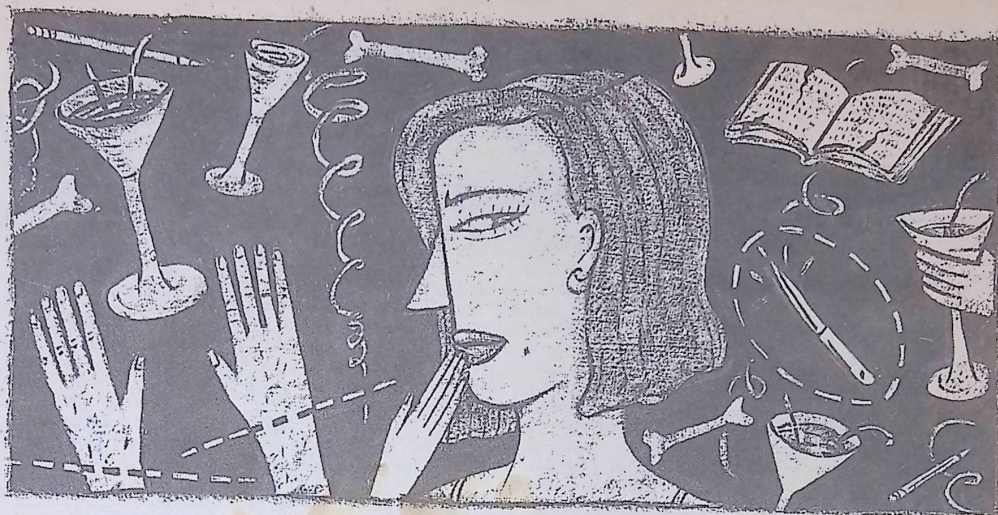
"I can also see the collages used as the basis of fabric designs," she said. "What it all amounts to is a tangible effort to do something interesting with my art rather than take a hack job."

Her 16-year-old daughter Betsy is a gifted writer, according to her mother, and daughter Danielle, two years older, is a talented painter.

"Each child takes after one parent, isn't that lucky," quipped Mrs. Mailer.

The exhibit at A Touch of Whimsey (it will continue through April 30) is a starting point. Collages are priced from \$150 to \$1,200. You have to start somewhere, don't you?

effort to pursue an internationalist foreign policy was anathema. As the world crisis deepened in the late 1930's, and Roosevelt sought ways to put American influence onto the scales on the side of the democracies, McCormick stepped forward as the most outspoken of isolationists. The United States had nothing at stake in the looming European conflict, he thundered. All the proof necessary to that proposition was to be found in the history of American involvement in World War I — in which, not incidentally, McCormick had served, rising to the rank of colonel. The American intervention in Europe in 1917, McCormick believed, had claimed some 50,000 American lives yet had done nothing to redeem the hopelessly rivalrous Europeans. The miserable failure of that great departure from the ancient American principle of isolationism starkly warned against any further dalliance with internationalist policies. Along with his cousin Joseph Patterson's *Daily News* and his cousin Cissy Patterson's *Washington Times-Herald*, McCormick's *Tribune* formed a major platform for those isolationist preachments. Henry Luce called the cousins the "Three Furies of Isolation." Roosevelt called them the "McCormick-Patterson Axis."



Ancient Evenings

Adele Mailer remembers literary dinners, bohemian shindigs and one notorious night.

THE LAST PARTY

Scenes From My Life With Norman Mailer.

By Adele Mailer.

Illustrated. 380 pp. New York: Barricade Books. \$25.

By M. G. Lord

IT was no accident that when Roosevelt in October 1937 gave his famous "quarantine" speech, the first of his major public speeches designed to wean his countrymen away from their isolationist illusions, he ventured into Chicagoland to beard the lion in his den (and was forced almost immediately to back off). Nor was it accidental that it was *The Tribune* that leaked the War Department's "Victory Program" plans in 1941, in an effort to undermine political support for military preparation; nor that it was *The Tribune* that published sensitive details about the Navy's victory at Midway in 1942 — an episode that triggered an abortive attempt to prosecute McCormick on charges of treason. Against this background, *The Tribune*'s most notorious journalistic gaffe — the "Dewey Defeats Truman" headline in 1948 — seems but one more episode in a long line of instances where McCormick's editorial wishes were father to *The Tribune*'s reportorial position.

Though for the most part Smith is content to describe rather than explain, he explores these and many other chapters in McCormick's long career with sensitivity, flair and even a modicum of sympathy. Yet even his measured empathy is put to the test in the book's concluding pages. McCormick, he writes, "lived too long," and in the years immediately preceding his death in 1955, his "flair for the outrageous bordered on self-parody." McCormick's eroded inner life also remains elusive, including his two marriages, both apparently as barren of emotional warmth as they were of children. Readers will be left wondering, too, what to make of the haunting paradox that McCormick, the scourge of all things alien, the most disillusioned of World War I veterans, the paladin of isolation, died at the estate he named for the World War I battle in which he had fought — Cantigny — and directed that he should be buried in his World War I uniform.

FOR those of you who were not reading the tabloids in 1955, Adele Mailer was the wife Norman Mailer stabbed with "a dirty three-inch penknife" after a night of heavy drinking. This incident, which put her in the intensive care unit of Manhattan's University Hospital, ended their marriage and left her furious. Although she claims to have healed her hatred "with love," she can't resist passing along some remarkably hostile revenge fantasies. In a "Coda" at the end of "The Last Party: Scenes From My Life With Norman Mailer," she watches her former husband on television and imagines "happily scooping out those baby blues like spoonfuls of cantaloupe, slowly slitting his fat, bourbon-soaked liver" — or, better yet, "chopping off his hands, dooming him to write the great American novel with his feet."

Adele Mailer (née Morales) did not begin life as a shrill lush likely to be mistaken for a cutting board by her spouse. But at 13, when her mother took her to see a production of "Carmen," she was captivated by a bad role model: "I decided I was going to be that beautiful temptress who ate men alive, flossed her teeth and spit out the bones, wearing an endless supply of costumes by Frederick's of Hollywood." Introduced to

hard-drinking, avant-garde society by her first lover, Ed Fancher, a co-founder of *The Village Voice*, she was soon vomiting her way through bohemian shindigs in Greenwich Village, peyote parties in New Orleans and literary dinners in Connecticut, including one at "Bill" Styron's, where, in a boozy haze, she excited with the novelist Mary Lee Settle's velvet coat, threw up on it and refused to give it back.

The allure, presumably, of this memoir is the star-studded circle through which Adele Mailer once lurched. Although she drops a lot of names — the Mailers were chummy with the likes of Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando, Lillian Hellman and Alberto Moravia — she reveals little about these celebrities except what she thinks they thought of her. We learn, for example, that Dwight Macdonald was "real" and that "I sensed he found me attractive" — and that Styron, who was filled with "an insecurity about his masculinity," didn't. Self-absorption colors even her travel writing: "I felt much more attractive in Germany than I did in Paris. Frenchmen hadn't paid that much attention to me. But the men in Munich made much of my dark good looks."

Readers seeking a titillating glimpse of the Mailers' intimate life will be disappointed. Although the book depicts much unruly sex, its language is so hackneyed that it renders the particular generic. (Male body parts rise "in angry splendor"; after an argument, the Mailers "made love — not a dry love, but soft, hot love.") When she affects primness, however, she is an inadvertent hoot: "I certainly was no seasoned biologist," she protests, before fornicating with a married couple in "their beautiful loft."

Although it is never explicitly named, the book has an unmistakable leitmotif: terror of homosexuality. Her husband breaks with Styron when Sty-

ron calls her "a lesbian," stabs her when she labels him a "faggot" and slugs a stranger who remarks that his poodle "is queer." When he tells his wife that he has had sex with a transvestite, she melodramatically remarks, "I knew I would never let him touch me again." Then there's the intense jealousy she harbors toward his close friend Mickey Knox, an actor. Like her husband, she says, Knox was a mama's boy, and he took his mother's death hard. He also made the mistake of approaching her for sympathy. "Mick was talking to me about his mother when he broke down and cried — and I laughed," she writes. "I can't think why I responded in that way." Perhaps it has something to do with an observation she attributes to Gore Vidal: "Norman has always been married to Mickey. There's never been anyone else for him."

IN the book, Adele Mailer acknowledges her role in the A.A. custom of being judged in any memoir. What Milder's tale is its telling. "The book is a lesson in unintentional which seems to manifest itself in three ways: an outrageous disparity between tone and content, the presence of a record number of clichés and ceaseless self-aggrandizing."

After the knifing, Adele Mailer developed pleurisy and had to expectorate "black phlegm" 10 times a day. The "cheerful nurse," she recalls, handed her a jar and said: "Time for our coughing. You have to get it out." She seems to have embraced this strategy for her writing — not to mind that it is more suited to therapy than literature.

M. G. Lord's most recent book is "Forever Barbie: The Unauthorized Biography of a Real Doll."